

Message Text

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EXDIS

FOL RPT SECTO 10031 SENT ACTION MANAMA INFO ABU DHABI, AMMAN,
BEIRUT, CAIRO, DAMASCUS, DOHA, JIDDA, KUWAIT, LONDON, MUSCAT,
SANA, TEL AVIV & SECSTATE DTD 03 OCT 77

QUOTE: S E C R E T SECTO 10031

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: (OVIP(VANCE, CYRUS), PFOR, BA, US

SUBJ: US-BAHRAINI BILATERAL

1. SUMMARY: IN HOUR-LONG BILATERAL WITH BAHRAINI FONMIN,
ATHERTON BRIEFED HIM ON CURRENT STATUS OF MIDDLE EAST
NEGOTIATIONS, STRESSING: (A) ADMINISTRATION'S DEEP
COMMITMENT TO THE PEACE PROCESS, (B) NEED FOR FLEXIBILITY
TO SOLVE PROCEDURAL PROBLEMS TO PERMIT CONVENING OF GENEVA
THIS YEAR, AND (C) NEED TO KEEP CONTENTIOUS RESOLUTIONS OUT
OF THIS SESSION OF UNGA AND SC. IN AREA OF BILATERAL
RELATIONS, MUTUAL SATISFACTION WAS EXPRESSED ABOUT SUCCESS-
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FUL CONCLUSION OF MIDDLE EAST FORCE NEGOTIATIONS, AND
THERE WAS AGREEMENT MORE HIGH-LEVEL US DELEGATIONS SHOULD
VISIT THE GULF. END SUMMARY.

2. NEA ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON, ACCOMPANIED BY
ARP DEPUTY DIRECTOR COUNTRYMAN, HELD ONE-HOUR BILATERAL
WITH BAHRAINI FONMIN SHAIKH MUHAMMAD BIN-MUBARAK

SEP. 30.

3. ATHERTON BEGAN BY REGRETTING SECRETARY'S INABILITY TO SEE FOREIGN MINISTER BUT NOTED HE COULD BE ENGAGED IN NO MORE IMPORTANT WORK THAN CURRENT MIDDLE EAST PEACE EFFORTS. FONMIN SAID HE FULLY UNDERSTOOD PRESSURES ON SECRETARY. HE NOTED WITH SATISFACTION THAT "EVERYONE" SENSED ADMINISTRATION'S DEEP COMMITMENT TO ACHIEVE COMPREHENSIVE PEACE SETTLEMENT. ATHERTON, STRESSING PRESIDENT'S AND SECRETARY'S DETERMINATION TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO GET TO GENEVA THIS YEAR IN ORDER TO COME TO GRIPS WITH SUBSTANTIVE QUESTIONS, SAID ALL PARTIES APPEAR SERIOUSLY ENGAGED IN A COMMON ENDEAVOR AND THAT THE SOVIETS GIVE EVERY INDICATION OF HAVING SAME OBJECTIVE. ATHERTON RECOGNIZED A CERTAIN SKEPTICISM IN THE ARAB WORLD ABOUT ISRAELI INTENTIONS BUT WISHED TO CONVEY HIS OWN SENSE THAT DAYAN, IN CURRENT ROUND OF TALKS, REFLECTS SERIOUS EFFORT TO GET TO GENEVA AND DEFINITELY WANTS PEACE SETTLEMENT.

4. ATHERTON THEN PUT CURRENT ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS IN BROADER PERSPECTIVE OF EFFORTS STARTED AT THE VERY BEGINNING OF THIS ADMINISTRATION TO SET IN MOTION ONCE AGAIN THE PEACE PROCESS THROUGH THE SECRETARY'S MIDDLE EAST TROP AND THE PRESIDENT'S EARLIER TALKS IN THE US WITH KEY ARAB LEADERS.

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5. ATHERTON SAID WE RECOGNIZE BASIC SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES CAN ONLY BE FINALLY RESOLVED IN CONTEXT OF FORMAL NEGOTIATIONS, BUT WE HAVE BEEN DISCUSSING THESE ISSUES (WITHDRAWAL, BORDERS AND SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS; THE NATURE OF PEACE; AND THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION) TO SEE IF AREAS OF DISAGREEMENT CAN BE NARROWED BEFORE GENEVA. OUR EFFORTS NOW, HOWEVER, ARE FOCUSED PARTICULARLY ON GETTING AGREED BASIS OR TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR RECONVENING GENEVA CONFERENCE SO THAT THERE WILL BE A FORUM WITHIN WHICH TO ADDRESS THE SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES.

6. ATHERTON NOTED TWO KEY ISSUES MUST BE SOLVED TO GET TO GENEVA:

A. PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION -- ESSENTIAL PROBLEM IS HOW TO RECONCILE ISRAELI REFUSAL TO SIT DOWN WITH THE PLO WITH ARAB CONTENTION PLO MUST REPRESENT THE PALESTINIANS. US STARTS FROM PREMISE THAT YOU CANNOT SOLVE MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM WITHOUT SOLVING PALESTINIAN PROBLEM, AND THIS MEANS FINDING WAY FOR PALESTINIANS TO BE REPRESENTED AT GENEVA. WE BELIEVE A SINGLE, UNIFIED ARAB DELEGATION HOLDS OUT GREATEST HOPE. WE BELIEVE ARABS

CAN ACCEPT THIS, AND NOW THE ISRAELIS ALSO HAVE ACCEPTED CONCEPT IN PRINCIPLE, ALTHOUGH THE CONDITIONS THEY HAVE ANNOUNCED ARE NOT OURS AND THERE REMAIN DIFFICULT DETAILS TO BE WORKED OUT, REQUIRING GIVE ON BOTH SIDES, BEFORE THIS ISSUE IS RESOLVED.

B. METHODS OF NEGOTIATION -- PROBLEMS HERE, ATHERTON NOTED, INVOLVE WHETHER AT GENEVA TO NEGOTIATE IN BILATERAL OR MULTILATERAL CONTEXT. FLEXIBILITY WILL BE REQUIRED HERE AGAIN BY ALL PARTIES. SOME ISSUES ARE BETTER SUITED TO A BILATERAL APPROACH (E.G., SINAI SHOULD BE NEGOTIATED BETWEEN EGYPT AND ISRAEL), BUT OTHERS SUCH AS FUTURE OF GAZA AND WEST BANK, REFUGEES AND OTHER PALESTINIAN-RELATED ISSUES, MIGHT BE MORE APPROPRIATELY HANDLED IN MULTILATERAL CONTEXT.

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7. FONMIN SAID HE WISHED ATHERTON TO KNOW ARAB GOVERNMENTS UNDERSTAND PURPOSEFULNESS OF US CURRENT EFFORTS, AND NOTED ARABS HAVE GIVEN SERIOUS THOUGHT TO THE SHAPE OF FINAL SETTLEMENT, INCLUDING SUCH ISSUES AS WITHDRAWAL FROM THE WEST BANK AND A PALESTINIAN STATE. THE OTHER SIDE HAS NOT, HE DECLARED, AND SUGGESTED THAT ISRAEL'S FRIENDS ENCOURAGE HER TO THINK REALISTICALLY ABOUT THE SHAPE OF AN EVENTUAL PEACE. FONMIN ALSO SAID THAT US WAS FOR THE FIRST TIME CLOSE TO HAVING A "PMVX BOINIAN POLICY" AND THAT US PUBLIC OPINION HAS EVOLVED CONSIDERABLY REGARDING THE MIDDLE EAST.

8. ATHERTON NOTED THAT THERE OBVIOUSLY REMAIN DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE DISPUTANTS BUT ALSO BETWEEN US AND THE ISRAELIS AS WELL AS BETWEEN US AND THE ARABS AND AMONG THE ARABS THEMSELVES, BUT WITHOUT NEGOTIATION PROCESS OUR ABILITY TO INFLUENCE POSITIONS OF PARTIES IS LIMITED. RE PALESTINIANS, ATHERTON REMINDED FONMIN THAT THE IMAGE OF THE PLO IS STILL QUITE NEGATIVE IN THE US. HE RECALLED THAT IN SEPT. 1975 SINAI II SIDE AGREEMENT WITH THE ISRAELIS WE HAD PLEDGED THAT UNLESS THE PLO ACCEPTS RESOLUTION 242 AND THE RIGHT OF ISRAEL TO EXIST, WE WOULD NOT HAVE DIRECT CONTACT WITH THEM, AND WE WILL HONOR THAT AGREEMENT. ATHERTON FURTHER NOTED THAT IF WE WERE TO BREAK THAT COMMITMENT IT WOULD NOT CONTRIBUTE TO FURTHERING EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST. THE PRESIDENT WOULD BE CRITICIZED FOR BREAKING A COMMITMENT WHEN WHAT HE IS TRYING TO DO IS BUILD CONFIDENCE IN AND SUPPORT FOR HIS POLICY TOWARD A MIDDLE EAST PEACE. ATHERTON ALSO VOICED CONCERN ABOUT ANY ATTEMPTS IN CURRENT UNGA TO INTRODUCE RESO-
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LUTIONS WHICH WOULD POISON THE NEGOTIATING ATMOSPHERE, PARTICULARLY REGARDING SETTLEMENTS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND PALESTINIANS RIGHTS. HE REMINDED FONMIN THAT MANY IN ISRAEL HAD LONG HAD RESERVATIONS ABOUT RESOLUTION 242 AND THAT ANYTHING THAT LOOKED LIKE A REWRITE OF 242 WOULD BE REJECTED.

9. MOVING TO US/BAHRAIN BILATERAL RELATIONS, ATHERTON EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR BAHRAIN'S COOPERATION, AND PARTICULARLY FOR THE FONMIN'S PERSONAL ROLE, IN WORKING OUT NEW ARRANGEMENTS FOR MIDDLE EAST FORCE. FONMIN SAID THAT US NAVY HAD ALSO BEEN MOST COOPERATIVE AND THAT HIS MAIN CONCERN WAS THE US PRESENCE IN THE AREA NOT BE STATIC BUT EVOLVE IN A WAY WHICH WOULD BEST SATISFY OUR MUTUAL INTERESTS. FONMIN DID NOT RAISE NY TIMES ARTICLE SUBJECT OF MANAMA 2093 AND STATE 233854. FONMIN THEN NOTED HE HAD RECENTLY TOLD DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUE THAT UNFORTUNATELY IT WAS SOMETIMES NECESSARY TO MIX BUSINESS AND POLITICS. HE AND ATHERTON AGREED THAT UNSOLVED MIDDLE EAST PROBLEMS CANNOT HELP BUT HAVE IMPLICATIONS FOR US/ARAB BILATERAL RELATIONS. NOTING IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC OPINION IN BOTH US AND ARAB COUNTRIES, FONMIN HOPED TO GET MORE CONGRESSMEN TO VISIT THE ARAB WORLD SO THEY WOULD GAIN INSIGHT INTO ARAB POSITIONS.

10. FONMIN THEN NOTED USEFULNESS OF HIGH-LEVEL CONTACTS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES AND HOPED THAT THERE COULD BE AN INCREASE OF US VISITORS TO SUCH PLACES AS BAHRAIN AND THE GULF. ATHERTON CONCURRED AND AGREED TO LOOK INTO THE QUESTION OF SENDING SENIOR US REPRESENTATIVE TO THE GULF.

11. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION FROM ATHERTON, FONMIN SAID HE WAS GENERALLY HAPPY WITH CURRENT STATE OF COOPERATION IN GULF THOUGH IT IS NOT EXACTLY WHAT BAHRAIN WANTS.

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DUE TO IRAQ, THERE WAS A FAILURE, FOR EXAMPLE, TO REACH A GULF SECURITY AGREEMENT, BUT THIS CAN COME IN THE FUTURE. BAHRAIN HAS GOOD RELATIONS WITH IRAN, SAUDI ARABIA, AND EVEN IRAQ. OMAN IS CALM. SAUDI ARABIA IS EXTENDING ITS INFLUENCE IN AFRICA IN SUCH PLACES AS ZAIRE AND THE HORN OF AFRICA. IF THE MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM IS SOLVED, ARAB MODERATES CAN TURN THEIR ATTENTION TO

ASSISTING THESE NEARBY AREAS.

VANCE

UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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